My name is Andrew Wright. I have an average life. I wake up, drive to work, work, drive home, and then prepare to do it all over again. I do this five days a week and recover from the grueling monotony in the remaining two. It deadens the soul, but that's how you live in this modern world with its rules of regularity. You spend your first twenty years preparing to waste your next fifty, and then the world forgets about you. If you attempt to break away from this cycle the harness of reality shoves you back into your role like a product on a storefront shelf etched out of place. As far as I can tell, that's the way it's always been; that's the way it'll always be; and no one will ever have a problem with it.

My life may be mundane but I am content with it. I live it from day to day, and enjoy the moments of bliss as they come to pass. I find joy in the simplicities that surround me. Every so often I go to a restaurant, or see a movie, or find some other distraction that the city has to offer. Tonight I embrace the simple pleasure of sitting on my porch in the cool summer air, just gazing at the stars that have entranced me since I was young. Such black and white beauty shouldn't fit in this grey and urban world. Somehow it does and I couldn't be happier with such simplistic majesty.

I'm left alone with my thoughts. Very few cars break the silence; living out of the way of the world does have its benefits. The only sound I can hear above my solemn breaths are the symphony of crickets doing what they have done since time's inception and the buzzing of electrical wires above me. I close my eyes in peace.

They're thrown open when I hear a shatter, followed by an echo of muffled shouting. Why does this still surprise me? I look to my neighbors' house towards the direction of the row. It's the same thing every single night. They never stop. They never shut up, and it's starting to drive me crazy. Another shatter is heard through the air. I don't even blink. I sigh and go inside. I'm done with this.

My living room provides a safe barrier from the disturbances of urban life. I don't hear traffic passing by. I don't hear buzzing electricity. Most importantly I don't hear the shattering of glass, the breaking of plates, or the turmoil of my neighbors. They're annoying yes, but they're easy enough to ignore. It's none of my business and if they want to kill each other it'll only bring the silence faster.

Jesus Christ, why do I think things like that? I know I should call for help or do something, but I often resort to waiting. I wait for them to stop, for it to never

happen again. I wait for someone else to get so fed up with this bullshit and call someone. No one does. The arguments and fights occur every single night, like clockwork. I began to think that they'd be out of things to fight over a few months ago, and the belief bordering on hope does crop up once in awhile.

I stare out my window towards their house. Their blinds are closed so I see nothing to accompany the soundtrack of bickering. It doesn't stop my imagination from playing guessing games. I don't know the context of anything so it runs wild with all of the vivid possibilities, and it gets really depressing really quickly.

I turn away when another thought pierces my mind. Why do I care? In all honesty, this is none of my business. I can't hear them from inside my house and neither parties are calling the police. The only harm seems to be done is to the solemn night and to the flatware that continues to break. I sit on my sofa and just close my eyes. I'm finally taken away from my thoughts of my neighbors and their continuous fights.

I wake up several hours later. My eyes rest on the clock under my television. Shit, is it nine already? My stomach is bothering me. Supper isn't sitting well. Ugh. Damn, it's Thursday. I need to take out the trash. I stumble around in my daze and walk out the front door. The fresh air stirs me from my stupor. It feels good. Then I noticed that it's still going on. They're still at it? Really?

I'm in no mood to put up with this. I pull my trash to the curb as quick as I can with my groaning stomach, trying to ignore the goddamn bickering. I don't succeed. I take the only other option. I abandon the trash can and head back inside. It's late, I'm not feeling well, I have to work tomorrow, and I'm just tired of this. I'll deal with it tomorrow. I'll deal with all of this tomorrow.

The front door is now locked. I wearily walk upstairs and crash onto my bed. A chill breeze blows through the open window, followed by the muffled shouts. I'm too tired to close it, and I'm too tired to care. I close my eyes and struggle to get to sleep. Sleep comes, eventually. One of the simplest joys in the world and it never fails to settle my mood.

The next day the record is back on track. The alarm clock pulls me out of my

slumber. I eat my breakfast of toast, the only thing my sleepy self has the care or ability to make, and I notice the trash can still sitting in the drive way. I take care of it, take care of myself, and drive off to work. While I work, the thoughts and conflicts of last night become buried behind concerns of paperwork that needs to be filed, meetings I need to attend, and the weekend.

The solace doesn't last forever. A coffee break is disturbed by the echoes of the past. Lunch tastes sour with the flavorings of turmoil and conflict. I try to forget these tumors in my thoughts during what should be my reprieve to the grind of the day, but the more that I look away, the more that I ignore, the more flagrant they become. I try to convince myself that there's absolutely nothing I can do now to end the ongoing war, but my thoughts don't care. They keep belting me with the facts. This has been going on for far too long and someone will seriously end up hurt if no course of action is taken.

I feel Guilt. If someone ends up hurt, would it be my fault? My mind goes both ways, telling me both yes and no. If they decide to kill each other then it was their decision, not mine. If they decide to kill each other, I might have been able to stop them. I seriously need to make up my mind and call for help or forget this whole ordeal before I hear gunfire.

Traffic is annoying. I don't usually mind it. There's no reason for me to hurry home. I've got no pets or family to care for and I'm not that hungry. Today is different. It allows me to contemplate my thoughts, and it's something that I really don't want to do. I've heard the story a thousand times today and it's grown tiresome and boring. I click on the radio to the sounds of static and breathe a sigh of relief. It's something that plays to a different tune than the bombastic parade turning about my mind.

Sweet peace hums. It doesn't last long before its jarred loose. I've arrived at my drive way, and gaze upon something that I've been trying to ignore. A little girl sits on the porch of my neighbor's house, bearing the same rusty colored hair as the man that lives there. Perhaps she's the one that has been peddling guilt this whole time. That face that I refuse to look at surely gives the theory some substance. She's quite the peddler, if that truly is the case.

I pull into the garage, turn off the car, and just sit there in near darkness. I don't

want to move. I don't want to think. I don't want to do anything, except freeze this moment in time. It's a peaceful moment, one which I haven't had in such a long time. It can't last forever though. I reluctantly open my car door. It bangs into the garage wall. I don't care. I get out and shut the door, then I breath in deeply.

I'm stalling. I guess it's one of the things I've always been good at. Whenever I get into a problem, I stall. If there's a meeting I haven't prepared for, I bullshit until its over. And if there's something I just don't want to deal with, I walk as slowly as possible out of the garage. Unfortunately my talents aren't very useful here. The slower that I walk the faster that my mind runs. It isn't fun. It isn't pleasant. I just want it to end.

My hand is on the doorknob to the driveway. I don't turn it. I wait a second, then I take a deep breath. The odor of rusty nails makes me cringe and this room is suddenly I place I no longer want to be. I thrust the door open and breath in the late summer air. It's a breath of relief to say the least and finally it's a moment I manage to enjoy despite its brevity, dashed by pressing matters.

I walk along the drive way, trying to avoid looking toward my neighbor's house. My eyes betray my command and I see the girl. I see her emerald eyes, stained red by the harshness of her reality. It's only a glimpse but it's all that I need. I turn my face towards her, almost out of sympathy and more brush strokes are painted in this canvas of tragedy. A scarlet slash cascades across her face.

Before I can look away in a stew of teary horror, she looks towards me and our eyes connect. An emergency flare is shot into the sky, and my mind is wrought with pleas of help, clamors of confusion. Those silent shouts are met with a void of nothingness. I do something that I will regret until the day that I die. I turn the other cheek and start heading indoors. A lesser me would use a facade of "it's not my problem, things will sort themselves out." The me that I am is not that weak, but the me that I am is not strong enough to make the horrors that I am far too aware of disappear from her life. It still doesn't stop me from feeling like a worthless excuse for a human being as I shut my front door behind me.

I feel queasy. I sit down on my sofa and stare at the wall. I know what I have to do, and I know that the strategy of laissez faire, which I have clung to for so long, will not break these shards of calamity apart. A minute later and my phone book is

opened on the table, and I hold my cellphone in one hand. Time slinks along at a snail's pace as I dial one button after another.

Why am I so hesitant? This is the right thing to do. What am I so afraid of? Is a question I ask myself in deceit. I know what I'm afraid of. I'm afraid of relinquishing my status as an innocent bystander. I'm afraid of making the situation worse. Worst of all, I'm afraid of being ineffective despite all my best efforts.

The final number is pressed and I hold the cold phone to my head. It's ringing. Stress and relief form a torrent in my mind and the persistent ambivalence begins to cause my head and heart to ache. Another ring. Are they busy? If they are, what do I do? Is this a good thing.

"Hello, you've reached Child Protective Services. What is the situation?" a woman's voice clears the storm.

I take a deep breath and I begin to explain everything.